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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Monday, December 7, 1942

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SUBJECT "IN AND OUT OF THE KRAUT KEG." Information from home economists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

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The cabbage situation this fall has been like the last act of an old-fashioned play with the beautiful and virtuous heroine saved from destruction just in the very nick of time. It is a matter of opinion, of course, whether cabbages are beautiful, but they have enough virtues to deserve saving. So with sauerkraut packers and eaters to the rescue, the big crop of late cabbage in this country has a good chance of resume from the villain Waste.

The cabbages that have been in danger are the domestic, big-headed kind which ordinarily go into the commercial sauerkraut pack. But this year the packers had no tin allotted for kraut. No more canned kraut! Did that mean no more kraut? No. Marketing officials of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and packers get together on the problem.....packers converted from tin to wood....and millions of gallons of kraut have already gone into barrels. Some cabbage is still on the market for sale fresh and some is stored for selling later in the winter. When you buy kraut in bulk from the grocer's barrel, or buy cabbage to make kraut at home....or when you buy fresh cabbage for salad or cooking....you are lending a hand in saving one of the country's valuable fall food crops.

As for kraut's place on the dinner table, home economists suggest that kraut furnishes contrasting flavor at a meal. It's relish and a vegetable, too.

A taste of sour and a taste of salt along with its own special good cabbage taste. If a meal seems a little mild--has a good deal of plain bland

flavor, ~~as winter meals sometimes do,~~ you can often give menu zip with sauerkraut.

"The kraut keg is abrim with health" is an old-time saying. And truly sauerkraut does add more than flavor to meals. It adds some minerals and vitamins, but not so much of the vitamins as raw cabbage.

Famous food couples are kraut and sausage, kraut and spareribs, kraut and pigs' knuckles. But these are only a starter. Diced apples and kraut, browned together, make good company. Some people choose turkey or goose stuffed with kraut for a company dish. Kraut combines well with fried liver and with baked fish, too.

When you are planning dishes to make the most of meat flavor--or main dishes without meat, try kraut scalloped with macaroni and bits of meat...or kraut scalloped with leftover mashed potatoes and cheese.

Sauerkraut juice has been a popular beverage for a number of years. It makes a good appetizer or first course at a meal. Some like the juice straight. Others prefer it with a little lemon juice, or mixed half-and-half with tomato juice.

As for cooking and seasoning kraut itself, you can do that in several ways.

Savory sauerkraut is sauerkraut Norwegian style. The Norwegians cook it quickly like this: Lightly brown one-fourth cup or less of fat in a frying pan. Then add 1 quart of kraut and one-fourth teaspoon of celery or caraway seed. Mix well, separating the kraut with a fork. Cover and cook for just 5 minutes. Serve hot.

This same savory sauerkraut with onion, apple and chopped potato added is the way the Pennsylvania Dutch like kraut.

So much for ways to cook and season kraut. Now here are directions for making it yourself.

If you put some of the cabbages to use by making kraut at home, first thought goes to containers. You can pack it in stone jars or crocks or in wooden kegs. Or you can put it in glass jars with lids and rubbers. Small jars, such as the 2-quart size, keep the kraut better because they are not opened so repeatedly.

Select solid heads fully mature and sound. This kind makes the best kraut. You would get poor kraut from loose-headed varieties or immature or defective heads. Allow 3-and one-half pounds of cabbage to a 2-quart jar. And allow salt at the rate of one-fourth pound to each 10 pounds of cabbage.

To make the kraut, first shred the cabbage and mix in the salt. Then pack into containers. Pack tight, but don't ram down.

If you are packing in glass put on the lids and rubbers but don't seal the jars. Place an enamel pan under the jars to catch juice that bubbles out and let the jars stand at 75 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit for two or three days or until there is good fermentation. Then pour the juice back in the jars. As soon as bubbling ceases - which will be in a few days - snap down the lids and seal. Timing is important, so keep an eye on the jars. For if sealed before bubbling stops, pressure may break the jars. If sealed too late, the kraut will spoil. If you pack in big stone or wood containers, cover with a clean cloth and a board or plate weighted down, and let it ferment for about 10 days.

Once the cabbage has fermented and become kraut, keep it clean and covered and safe from insects, and stored in a cool place until wanted.

Make kraut or buy it, the main thing to remember is to use the cabbage now, while it is plentiful.

